

# The P-Patch Community Garden Program: growing and nurturing Seattle

Thirty-six years ago would-be farmers, youth gardeners and the City of Seattle banded together to purchase a fallow tract of farm land that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had supplied food to the Pike Place Market. Their goal? To create a community space to garden. This garden, the first in Seattle since WWII, was part of a community gardening movement spreading throughout the country. Since then, our city and its residents have seen the value of stewarding areas in their neighborhoods to create vibrant community spaces for growing food. That original community garden, the Picardo Farm P-Patch (the “P” in P-Patch commemorates the Picardo family who owned the farm), is still farming strong - a gardening home to 250 families.

Today, the Department of Neighborhoods P-Patch Community Garden Program manages 68 gardens totaling 23 acres of land. More than 2,000 families have plots.

Following is information on the activities of the P-Patch Program and on the many ways that community gardening affects the lives of Seattle residents.



## Community Gardening

A community garden is defined as any piece of land gardened by a group of people. Our gardens are shared and publicly accessible green spaces that are typically planned, designed, built, and maintained by volunteer community members for their neighborhood's use and enjoyment. A community garden is an inspiring piece of work. It is a gathering place that strengthens social networks through cooperative activities, a source of pride among residents, a visible product of land stewardship and improved neighborhood environment, and a welcoming place to grow food.

The gardens are organic only and operate through the partnership of engaged community members, the P-Patch Trust and the Department of Neighborhoods P-Patch Program staff. P-Patches offer a diversity of amenities like communal flower areas, children's gardens, educational signage, demonstration spaces of sustainability practices, gathering spaces, native plant areas, orchards, and more.

## Youth Gardening

Gardens are a resource for youth to discover food, nature, gardening, cooking, and community building. This spring has seen a new wave of youth involvement throughout the P-Patch Program. Eight new community youth organizations acquired plots in P-Patch gardens, in addition to the 25 plots already in use. This past year, P-Patch Youth Programming conducted more than 50 gardening classes, four workshops, and several community service projects. All of this would not have been possible without a dedicated group of volunteer assistants. Youth are stepping up and getting excited about what the local community garden has to offer!

The program partners with organizations such as the Refugee Woman's Alliance, Youth Orion, Vietnamese Friendship Association, Positive Energy, Girl Scouts, YMCA and Powerful Schools.

## Market Gardening: Community Supported Agriculture, Farm Stand and Large Tract Gardening

P-Patch market gardens function as a multifaceted learning environment for immigrants and refugees living in Seattle Housing Authority properties. Gardeners learn about growing crops in our climate and the diverse cultural palates of Seattle's residents. By working together to plan, sow, tend, fertilize, harvest, prepare and market produce, the gardeners also practice their English speaking skills with each other and with their customers. This year, 13 gardeners speaking Vietnamese, Cantonese, Khmer, Somali, Laotian, Spanish and English collaborated to provide 22 weeks of produce to 43 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscribers. They also sell their produce at weekly farm stands designed to provide fresh vegetables to the community that surrounds their urban gardens in the High Point and New Holly neighborhoods. Next year, the program will expand to the Rainier Vista community.

A pilot market gardening program called the Large Tract Project is located at Marra Farm in South Park. It provides land to low-income gardeners to grow crops and operate their own small market garden business. This project provides supplemental income for participants, increases urban food production and food security, and supplies growers with education and information on various aspects of operating a market garden business.

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# A "Taste" of P-Patch Programs



## Picardo: Gleaning for Giving

Picardo gardeners weather the elements to pick food for their area food bank. In 2008 gardeners harvested almost 6,000 pounds.





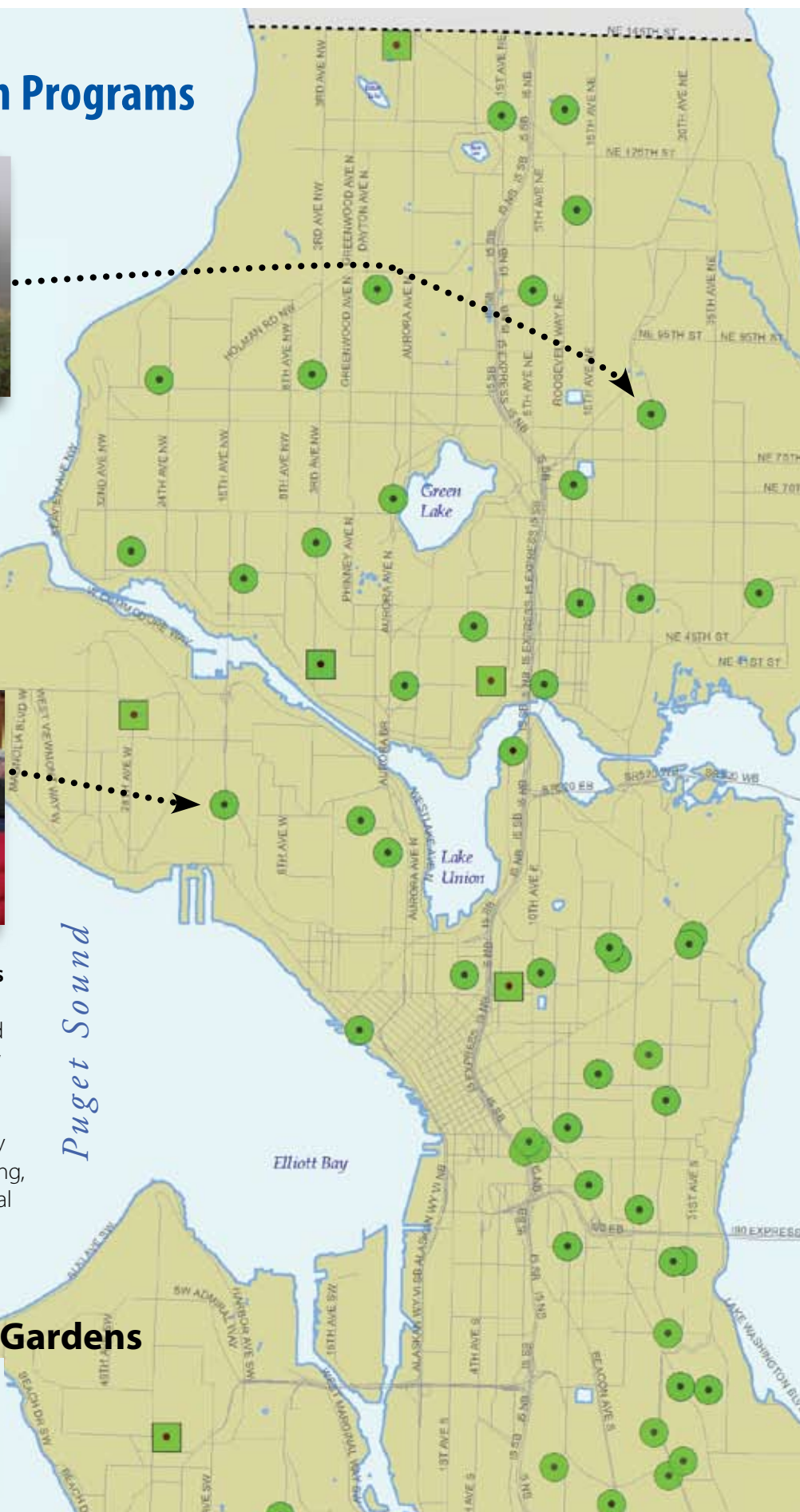
## Interbay: Partnering with students and volunteers

Starting with plants starts from Ballard High School, Interbay gardeners grew 4,789 lbs. of produce in 2008. Community members, along with P-Patch volunteer leaders, meet Tuesday evenings from spring to fall maintaining, harvesting, and delivering food to local food banks.

## P-Patch Community Gardens

### P-Patch Sites

-  Established
-  Under Development







### **Belltown: Community Gardening**

P-Patch gardeners team up with volunteers for United Way's Day of Caring annual service day. The Belltown P-Patch invited the volunteers to maintain the garden for broad community enjoyment.



### **Cascade: Youth Gardening**

Orion Youth Center youth help paint the Cascade Park P-Patch shed.



### **New Holly: Market Gardening**

New Holly market gardeners prepare their weekly farm stand.





### Community Food Security

Our community gardening program expands stable community access to healthy food in four ways: gardeners grow their own food; gardeners share food with local food banks; market gardens provide fresh organic and culturally appropriate food to low income communities; and youth learn critical food-growing skills that can support their families and be transferred to upcoming generations.

Staff helps steer local and regional food security work through a number of collaborative initiatives such as the Acting Food Policy Council, King County Food and Fitness Initiative, and Seattle Good Food Project. Matching Fund staff also meet regularly with groups looking to start food security projects, such as South Park's Market on Wheels.

### Parks & Green Spaces Levy

Most likely, the perceptive founders of the original P-Patch hoped to start a sustainable movement that would reach into every neighborhood. This movement gained even more strength last year thanks to the Seattle voters who approved the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy. The levy includes \$2 million for the development of additional community gardens and P-Patches. In the next three years, more than two acres will be added to the current 23 in community gardening production providing 500 more families the opportunity to have their own plot.

For more information about the P-Patch Program, visit <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch/>.

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### Partnerships & Volunteerism

What makes the P-Patch Community Garden program successful are our partnerships with nonprofit and governmental organizations. The volunteerism from these organizations and community members meant more than 15,500 hours in 2008 alone. We recognize our partners and their contribution to the community:

P-Patch Trust	Seattle Fleets and Facilities Dept.
Solid Ground - Lettuce Link	Seattle Housing Authority
Seattle Tilth	Public Health-Seattle & King County
Urban Garden Share	King County
Urban Land Army	University of Washington
Seattle Parks & Recreation	University Heights Center for the Community
Seattle Conservation Corps	American Community Gardening Association
Seattle Transportation Dept.	Native Plant Society
Seattle Public Utilities	Plant Amnesty
Seattle City Light	

### P-Patch Trust

*A key P-Patch partner throughout most of the program's history has been the P-Patch Trust. President Ray Schutte adds his thoughts:*

The P-Patch Trust was started in 1979 after years of grassroots organizing by the City's "P-Patchers." This original group started as the "P-Patch Advisory Council" representing the interest of community gardeners within the city. Over the years the Trust has played a leading role in advocating organic principles, ensuring access to low income gardeners, encouraging produce donations to food banks, and preserving gardens through purchase. It operates as a nature conservancy by acquiring, owning, conserving, and preserving urban open spaces to be utilized as public community gardens.

### Lettuce Link

*One P-Patch partner who helps connect gardeners' surplus produce with those in need is Solid Ground's Lettuce Link Program. Program Manager Michele Bates Benetua offers this snapshot:*

For over 20 years, Lettuce Link, a program of Solid Ground has partnered with the P-Patch Program to mobilize and support gardeners in sharing their bounty with neighbors at food banks, meal programs and shelters. Lettuce Link provides seeds, starts, scales, coordination and tips for engaging volunteer gardeners in tending food bank beds or in actively gleaning from individual plots. From the largest gardens to the smallest, P-Patches across the city are generously engaged in growing and giving, thereby increasing the availability of organic, locally grown produce for the most vulnerable among us. In 2008, P-Patch gardeners donated 25,000 pounds of city-grown produce!